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THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

NEW YORK:
RUDD & CARLETON.
M DCCC LXI.

THE

BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

BY

EDMUND C. STEDMAN,

ARMY CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEW YORK WORLD.

NEW YORK:

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M DCCC LXI.

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RESURGAMUS.

They say the battle has been lost—What then ?
  There is no need of tears, and doleful strains:
  The holy Cause for which we fought remains,
And millions of unconquerable men.
Repulse may do us good, it should not harm;
  Where work is to be done, 'tis well to know
  Its full extent; before the final blow,
Power, nerved to crush, must bare its strong right arm!
Rebels, rejoice, then, while ye may! for we,
  Driven back a moment, by the tide of war,
  Re-gathered, shall pour on ye from afar,
As mighty and resistless as the Sea!
The battle is *not* lost, while men remain,
Free men, and brave, like ours, to fight again!

R. H. STODDARD

NEW YORK, *July* 22, 1861.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following letter is republished in this form, in order to supply a demand for it which had previously exhausted the large daily, semi-weekly, and weekly editions of the paper in which it appeared. The publishers desire to state that no amendments or additions have been made to the original copy, but that, even at the risk of repeating errors of detail, which must perforce have occurred in a description written on the day after the battle, they have chosen to reprint it just as it came to "*The World*," fresh with the impressions left by the spectacle of the field.

NEW YORK, *August* 1, 1861.

THE

BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

(FROM THE NEW YORK WORLD, WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 1861.)

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, *July* 21.

AT two o'clock this morning I arrived in Washington, having witnessed the great conflict near Manassas Junction from beginning to end, and the gigantic rout and panic which broke up the federal army at its close. I stayed near the action an hour or two later than my associates, in order to gather the final incidents of the day, and fully satisfy myself as to the nature and extent of the misfortune.

And now in what order shall the event of yesterday be described? Even now how shall one pretend to give a synthetic narration of the whole battle, based on the heterogeneous statements of a thousand men; a battle whose arena was a tract miles in breadth and length, interspersed with hills and

forests; whose contending forces were divided into a dozen minor armies, continually interchanging their positions, and never all embraced within the cognizance of any spectator or participator. Even the general commanding the federal columns was ignorant, at the close, of the positions of the several corps; was ignorant, at the beginning, of the topography of the dangerous territory on which he attacked an overpowering foe. Was either general of division better informed of the movements even of his own forces? I doubt it. I only know that at sunset last evening, generals, colonels, and majors, were all retiring, devoid of their commands, no more respected or obeyed than the poorest private in the broken ranks. I know that a grand army, retreating before superior numbers, was never more disgracefully or needlessly disrupted, and blotted, as it were, out of existence in a single day. This is the truth, and why should it not be recorded? And why should I not tell the causes which produced this sad result? Weeks will be required for the proper summing up of details. At present, for one, I acknowledge my inadequacy to describe more than the panorama which passed before my own eyes, and the result decided by the combination of this with much that was seen and done elsewhere.

The affair of Thursday last was like a spectacle in an amphitheatre, visible in its oneness to all who were on the sides of that mountain valley. But those who were on yesterday's field now understand

how little of a great battle in a hilly region is known or seen by curious lookers-on; how much less by those actually engaged in its turmoil. But let me give the plan and commencement of the engagement on our side, the progress of that portion which was within my ken, and the truth in relation to the result.

PROGRAMME OF THE ADVANCE.

On Friday, the day succeeding our repulse at Bull Bun, Major Barnard, topographical engineer of the general staff, escorted by Co. B of the Second Cavalry regiment (under Lieut. Tompkins), made a wide reconnaissance of the country to the north, in order to examine the feasibility of turning the enemy's rear by a strategic movement in that direction.

A route was discovered by which it appeared that such a measure might be successfully executed. In a letter on the defences of Manassas Junction, I pointed out the different roads leading thitherward from Centreville. One—the most direct—is that passing through Thursday's battle-field; another, further north, leading, when produced, to Warrenton, beyond the Manassas Gap Railroad. From the latter, a minor road, branching off still more to the north, was found to open at a fork half-way between Centreville and the Bull Run ravine. This road could be used for the rapid advance of men and artillery, preceded by a corps of sappers and miners.

A plan was at once projected by Gen. McDowell for a decisive attack upon the enemy's line of defence, to be made simultaneously by three advancing columns, from the several points of approach. The various division encampments were already advantageously located for the inception of such a movement, and orders were swiftly issued for the entire army to start at six o'clock on Saturday afternoon. It was afterwards discovered that our stock of heavy ammunition embraced no more than nineteen rounds to each gun, and that we must send to Fairfax for a better supply. It was also thought advisable to have the army arrive in sight of the enemy at sunrise, and the first orders were accordingly countermanded, and fresh ones issued, appointing two o'clock of the ensuing morning for the hour of leaving camp. Three days' rations were to be served out by the commissary, and the tents of each regiment to remain standing and under guard.

In the moonlight of the stillest hour of the night our force of 36,000 men began to move, in pursuance of the following arrangement for the advance. On the left, or southernmost road, the gallant Colonel Richardson, be it remembered, had continued to hold the approach to the field where he fought so bravely on Thursday, his command consisting of the Fourth Brigade of Tyler's Division, viz. the Second and Third Michigan, the First Massachusetts, and the Twelfth New York regiments. It was rightly determined that these troops, if they fought at all,

should be apportioned to ground of which they already had partial knowledge. Behind Richardson, and near Centreville, Col. Miles was to take up his position in reserve, with his entire First and Second Brigades. These included the Eighth (German Rifles) and Twenty-ninth New York regiments, the Garibaldi Guard and the Twenty-fourth Pennsylvania, the Sixteenth, Eighteenth, Thirty-first, and Thirty-second New York regiments, and the Company G (Second Artillery) battery—the one lately brought from Fort Pickens. Thus Richardson could call to his support, if necessary, a reserve of 7,000 men, in addition to the 4000 with which he was instructed *to hold his position, to prevent the enemy from moving on Centreville past our left, but not to make any attack.* The centre, on the Warrenton road, commanded by Gen. Tyler, consisted of the First and Second Brigades of the Tyler Division, embracing the First and Second Ohio, and Second New York regiments, under Gen. Schenck, and the Sixty-ninth, Seventy-ninth and Thirteenth New York, and Second Wisconsin, under Col. Sherman. Carlisle's, Rickett's, and Ayre's battery, accompanied this important column, which numbered 6000 men, and which was supported in the rear by the Third Tyler Brigade, under Col. Keyes, consisting of the First, Second, and Third Connecticut regiments, and the Fourth Maine,—a force of 3000, available at a moment's call. On the extreme right, Col. Hunter took the lead, with the two brigades of his divi-

sion, viz. the Eighth and Fourteenth New York regiments under Col. Porter, with a battalion of the Second, Third, and Eighth Regular Infantry, a portion of the Second Cavalry, and the Fifth Artillery Battery, under Col. Burnside; the First and Second Ohio, the Seventy-first New York, and two New Hampshire regiments, with the renowned Rhode Island Battery. After Hunter's followed Col. Heintzelman's Division, including the ~~Fourth~~ and Fifth Massachusetts and the First Minnesota regiments, with a cavalry company and a battery, all under Col. Franklin, and the Second, Fourth, and Fifth Maine and Second Vermont regiment under Col. Howard. To about 14,000 men was thus intrusted the difficult and most essential labor of turning the enemy by a circuitous movement on the right, and these troops, as it eventuated, were to experience the larger part of the sanguinary fighting of the day.

On the night preceding the battle Gen. Cameron visited the camp, reviewed the third Tyler brigade, passed a few hours with Gen. McDowell, and then left for Washington, in spirits depressed by no premonition of the disaster which was to befal our arms, and the private grief which would add a deeper sorrow to the feelings he now experiences. After midnight a carriage was placed at Gen. McDowell's tent, which was to bear him to the scene of action. In order to be ready to move with the army I went down to the familiar quarters of Lieutenant Tompkins, whose company was attached to the

General's escort, and there slept an hour while our horses ate the only forage they were to have for a day and a half. At two o'clock we were awakened; the army had commenced to move.

THE MIDNIGHT MARCH.

There was moonlight, as I have said; and no moonlight scene ever offered more varying themes to the genius of a great artist. Through the hazy valleys, and on hill-slopes, miles apart, were burning the fires at which forty regiments had prepared their midnight meal. In the vistas opening along a dozen lines of view, thousands of men were moving among the fitful beacons; horses were harnessing to artillery, white army waggons were in motion with the ambulances—whose black covering, when one thought about it, seemed as appropriate as that of the coffin which accompanies a condemned man to the death before him. All was silent confusion and intermingling of moving horses and men. But forty thousand soldiers stir as quickly as a dozen, and in fifteen minutes from the commencement of the bustle every regiment had taken its place, ready to fall in to the division to which it was assigned. General McDowell and staff went in the centre of Tyler's, the central column. At 2½ A.M. the last soldier had left the extended encampments, except those remaining behind on guard.

The central line appeared to offer the best chances for a survey of the impending action, and in default of any certain pre-knowledge, was accompanied by all non-participators whom interest or duty had drawn to the movement of the day. In order to obtain a full review of its moonlight march to the most momentous effort of the campaign, I started at the extreme rear, and rapidly passed along to overtake the van of the column. For some way the central and right divisions were united, the latter forming off, as I have explained, about a mile beyond Centreville. So, leaving camp a mile below the village, I enjoyed the first spectacle of the day—a scene never to pass from the memory of those who saw it. Here were thousands of comrades-in-arms going forward to lay down their lives in a common cause. Here was all, and more than one had read of the solemn paraphernalia of war. These were not the armies of the aliens to us, but, with the dress, the colors, the officers, of every regiment, we were so familiar that those of each had for us their own interest, and a different charm. We knew the men, their discipline, their respective heroes; what corps were most relied on; whose voice was to be that of Hector or Agamemnon in the coming fray. How another day would change all this! How some long-vaunted battalions would perhaps lose their, as yet, unearned prestige, while accident or heroism should gild the standards of many before undistinguished! Then, as I followed along that procession of rumbling

cannon-carriages and caissons, standards and banners, the gleaming infantry, with their thousands of shining bayonets, and the mounted officers of every staff, what fine excitement was added to the occasion by the salutations and last assurances of the many comrades dearer than the rest! The spirit of the soldiery was magnificent. They were all smarting under the reproach of Thursday, and longing for the opportunity to wipe it out. There was glowing rivalry between the men of different States. "Old Massachusetts will not be ashamed of us to-night." "Wait till the Ohio boys get at them." "We'll fight for New York to-day," and a hundred similar utterances, were shouted from the different ranks. The officers were as glad of the task assigned them as their men. I rode a few moments with Lieut.-Col. Haggerty, of the Sixty-ninth. He mentioned the newspaper statement that he was killed at the former battle, and laughingly said that he felt very warlike for a dead man, and good for at least one battle more. This brave officer was almost the first victim of the day. The cheery voice of Meagher, late the Irish, now the American, patriot, rang out more heartily than ever. Then there were Corcoran, and Burnside, and Keyes, and Speidel, and many another skilled and gallant officer, all pushing forward to the first fruition of their three months' patient preparation. In the ranks of the Connecticut and other regiments, were old classmates and fellow-townsmen, with whom it was a privilege to exchange a word on

this so different occasion from any anticipated in those days when all the States were loyal, and the word "disunion" was a portion of an unknown tongue.

General McDowell's carriage halted at the junction of the two roads, a place most favorable for the quick reception of dispatches from all portions of the field. The column assigned to Colonel Hunter here divided from the main body and went on its unknown, perilous journey around the enemy's flank.

A mile along—and by this time the white morning twilight gave us a clearer prospect than the fading radiance which had thus far illumed the march—we could look across an open country on the left to the farm-house, where we knew Colonel Richardson was stationed, and to the blood-stained valley beyond, whose upper reaches were now to be the arena of a larger conflict. But it was after sunrise when the van of General Tyler's column came to the edge of the wooded hill overlooking those reaches. The sun had risen as splendid as the sun of Austerlitz. Was it an auspicious omen for us, or for the foe? Who could foretell? The scenery was too beautiful and full of nature's own peace, for one to believe in the possibility of the tumult and carnage just at hand, or that among those green oak forests lurked every engine of destruction which human contrivance has produced, with hosts of an enemy more dangerous and subtle than the wild beasts which had once here made their hiding-places. Then, too, it was Sunday

morning. Even in the wilderness, the sacred day seems purer and more hushed than any other. It was ours to first jar upon the stillness of the morning, and becloud the clearness of that serene atmosphere with the rude clangor of the avant messenger that heralded our challenge to a disloyal foe.

THE BATTLE.

From the point I mention, where the road slopes down to a protected ravine, we caught the first glimpse of the enemy. A line of infantry were drawn up across a meadow in the extreme distance, resting close upon woods behind them. We could see the reflection of their bayonets, and their regular disposition showed them expectant of an attack. After a moment's inspection, General Tyler ordered Carlisle to advance with his battery to the front, and here one could think of nothing but Milton's line:

"Vanguard! to right and left the front unfold."

The ancient order for the disposition of advance ranks is still in military usage. For the second and third Tyler brigades under Schenck, were at once formed in line of battle, in the woods on either side —the First Ohio, Second Wisconsin, Seventy-ninth, Thirteenth, and Sixty-ninth New York Regiments, succeeding each other on the right, and the Second

Ohio, and Second New York being similarly placed on the left, while the artillery came down the road between.

A great 32-pound rifled Parrot gun—the only one of its calibre in our field service—was brought forward, made to bear on the point where we had just seen the enemy (for the bayonets suddenly disappeared in the woods behind), and a shell was fired at fifteen minutes past six A. M., which burst in the air; but the report of the piece awoke the country, for leagues around, to a sense of what was to be the order of the day. The reverberation was tremendous, shaking through the hills like the volley of a dozen plebeian cannon, and the roar of the revolving shell indescribable. Throughout the battle that gun, whenever it was fired, seemed to hush and overpower everything else. We waited a moment for an answering salute, but receiving none, sent the second shell at a hill-top, two miles off, where we suspected that a battery had been planted by the rebels. The bomb burst like an echo close at the intended point, but still no answer came, and Gen. Tyler ordered Carlisle to cease firing, and bring the rest of his battery to the front of the woods and our column, ready for instant action. It was now about seven o'clock. For half an hour but little more was done; then skirmishers were deployed into the forest on each side, in order to discover the whereabouts of our nearest foes. Before us lay a rolling and comparatively open country, but with several

hills and groves cutting off any extended view. In the western distance on the left we could see the outskirts of Manassas Junction. The woods at whose edge our line of battle formed, extended half around the open fields in a kind of semicircle, and it was into the arms of this crescent that our skirmishers advanced. Soon we began to hear random shots exchanged in the thicket on the left, which proved the existence of an enemy in that direction. (What can be done against men who, to all the science and discipline of European warfare, add more than the meanness and cowardly treachery of the Indian? We had, all through the day, to hunt for the foe, though he numbered his myriads of men.) At the same time, a scout on the right captured a negro native, who was led to the General, shaking with fear, and anxious to impart such information as he had. Through him we learned that the rebels were quartered among the woods on the right and left, and in the groves in the open country; that they had erected a battery on the distant hill, and had kept him at work for three days, assisting to fell trees, so that a clear range of the road we occupied could be obtained.

By this time our scouts reported the enemy in some force on the left. Two or three Ohio skirmishers had been killed. Carlisle's battery was sent to the front of the woods on the right, where it could be brought to play where needed. A few shell were thrown into the opposite thicket, and then the

Second Ohio and Second New York marched down to rout out the enemy. In ten minutes their musketry was heard, and then a heavy cannonade answer. They had, without doubt, fallen upon a battery in the bushes. For a quarter of an hour their firing continued, when they came out in good order, confirming our surmises. After advancing a furlong they saw the enemy, who exchanged their fire and retired through the forest. Suddenly from a different direction a voice was heard, exclaiming, "Now, you Yankee devils, we've got you where we want you!" and several heavy guns were opened upon them with such effect that Schenck finally ordered them to retire, which they did in perfect order. The boys came out indignant at the practices of the rebels, and swearing they would rather fight three times their force in the open field than encounter the deadly mystery of those thickets. No soldiers are willing to have their fighting entirely confined to storming infernal earthworks at the point of the bayonet. Every regiment, yesterday, was at times a "forlorn hope."

A few dead and wounded began to be brought in, and the battle of Manassas had commenced. Carlisle's howitzers and the great rifled gun were opened in the direction of the battery, which answered promptly, and a brief, but terrific, cannonading ensued. In less than half an hour the enemy's guns were silenced, two of Carlisle's howitzers advancing through the woods to gain a closer position. But a

fatal error was here made, as I thought, by General Tyler, in not ordering in a division to drive out the four rebel regiments stationed behind the battery, and to seize its eight guns. Through some inexplicable fatuity he seemed to assume that when a battery was silenced it was convinced, and there it remained, with its defenders, unheard from and unthought of until the latter portion of the day, when it formed one cause of our final defeat. It is actually a fact, that while our whole forces were pushed along the right to a co-operation with Hunter's flanking column, and a distance of miles in advance, this position on the left, close to the scene of the commencement of the fight, and just in front of all our trains and ammunition wagons—a position chosen by all spectators as the most secure—was, through the day, within five minutes' reach of a concealed force of infantry, and a battery which had only been "silenced." No force was stationed to guard the rear of our left flank. It was near this very point, and with the assistance of this very infantry, that the enemy's final charge was made, which created such irretrievable confusion and dismay. And after the first few hours no officer could be found in this vicinity to pay any attention to its security. All had gone forward to follow the line of the contest.

Meantime, Richardson, on the extreme left, could not content himself with "maintaining his position," for we heard occasional discharges from two of his guns. However, he took no other part in the action

than by shelling the forces of the enemy which were sent rapidly from his vicinity to the immediate point of contest. From the hill behind we could see long columns advancing, and at first thought they were Richardson's men moving on Bull Run; but soon discovered their true character. Indeed, from every southward point the enemy's reinforcements began to pour in by thousands. Great clouds of dust arose from the distant roads. A person who ascended a lofty tree could see the continual arrival of cars at the nearest point on the Manassas Railroad, with hosts of soldiers, who formed in solid squares and moved swiftly forward to join in the contest. The whistle of the locomotive was plainly audible to those in our advance. It is believed that at least fifty thousand were added during the day to the thirty thousand rebels opposed to us at the onset. It was hard for our noble fellows to withstand these incessant reinforcements, but some of our regiments whipped several corps opposed to them in quick succession, and *whenever our forces, fresh or tired, met the enemy in open field, they made short work of his opposition.*

At $10\frac{1}{2}$ A.M. Hunter was heard from on the extreme right. He had previously sent a courier to General McDowell, reporting that he had safely crossed the Run. The general was lying on the ground, having been ill during the night, but at once mounted his horse and rode on to join the column on which so much depended. From the neighborhood of Sudley

Church he saw the enemy's left in battle array, and at once advanced upon them with the Fourteenth New York and a battalion of regular infantry—Colonel Hunter ordering up the stalwart Rhode Island regiments (one led by that model of the American volunteer, Burnside), the Second New Hampshire, and our own finely-disciplined Seventy-first. Gov. Sprague himself directed the movements of the Rhode Island Brigade, and was conspicuous through the day for gallantry. The enemy were found in heavy numbers opposite this unexcelled division of our army, and greeted it with shell and long volleys of battalion firing as it advanced. But on it went, and a fierce conflict ensued in the northern battle ground. As soon as Hunter was thus discovered to be making his way on the flank Gen. Tyler sent forward the right wing of his column to co-operate, and a grand force was thus brought to bear most effectually on the enemy's left and centre.

The famous Irish regiment, 1,600 strong, who have had so much of the hard digging to perform, claimed the honor of a share in the hard fighting, and led the van of Tyler's attack, followed by the Seventy-ninth (Highlanders) and Thirteenth New York, and Second Wisconsin.

It was a brave sight—that rush of the Sixty-ninth into the death-struggle! With such cheers as those which won the battles in the Peninsula, with a quick step at first, and then a double quick, and at last a run, they dashed forward and along the edge

of the extended forest. Coats and knapsacks were thrown to either side, that nothing might impede their work, but we knew that no guns would slip from the hands of those determined fellows, even if dying agonies were needed to close them with a firmer grasp. As the line swept along, Meagher galloped toward the head, crying "Come on, boys! you've got your chance at last!" I have not since seen him, but hear that he fought magnificently, and is wounded.

Tyler's forces thus moved forward for half a mile, describing quite one-fourth of a circle on the right, until they met a division of the enemy, and of course a battery of the enemy's most approved pattern.

THE HEAT OF THE CONTEST.

It was noon, and now the battle commenced in the fierceness of its most extended fury. The batteries on the distant hill began to play upon our own, and upon our advancing troops, with hot and thunderous effect. Carlisle answered for us, and Sherman for Hunter's Division, while the great 32-pounder addressed itself resistlessly to the alternate defences of the foe. The noise of the cannonading was deafening and continuous. Conversely to the circumstance of the former engagement, it completely drowned, at this period, the volleys of the musketry and riflemen. It blanched the cheeks of the villagers at Centreville, to the main

street of which place some of the enemy's rifled shell were thrown. It was heard at Fairfax, at Alexandria, at Washington itself. Five or six heavy batteries were in operation at once, and to their clamor was added the lesser roll of twenty thousand small-arms. What could we civilians see of the fight at this time? Little: yet perhaps more than any who were engaged in it. How anxiously we strained our eyes to catch the various movements, thoughtless of everything but the spectacle, and the successes or reverses of the federal army. Our infantry were engaged in woods and meadows beyond our view. We knew not the nature or position of the force they were fighting. But now and then there would be a fierce rush into the open prospect, a gallant charge on one side and a retreat on the other, and we saw plainly that our columns were gaining ground, and steadily pursuing their advantage by their gradual movement which continued toward the distance and the enemy's centre.

We indeed heard continuous tidings of heroism and victory; and those in the trees above us told us of more than we could discover with our field glasses from below. We heard that Hunter had fairly rounded the enemy's flank, and then we listened for ourselves to the sound of his charges in the northern woods, and saw for ourselves the air gathering up smoke from their branches, and the wavering column of the Mississippians as they fled from their first battery and were forced into

the open field. Then we saw our own Sixty-ninth and Seventy-ninth, corps animated by a chivalrous national rivalry, press on to the support of the more distant column. We could catch glimpses of the continual advances and retreats; could hear occasionally the guns of a battery before undiscovered; could guess how terribly all this accumulation of death upon death must tell upon those undaunted men, but could also see—and our cheers continually followed the knowledge—that our forces were gradually driving the right of the enemy around the second quarter of a circle, until by one o'clock the main battle was raging at a point almost directly opposite our standing-place—the road at the edge of the woods—where it had commenced six hours before.

There was a hill at the distance of a mile and a half to which I have heretofore alluded. From its height overlooking the whole plain, a few shell had reached us early in the day, and as it was nearer the Manassas road than almost any other portion of the field, more of the enemy's reinforcements gathered about its ridge than to the aid of the beaten rebels in the woods and valleys. Here there was an open battery, and long lines of infantry in support, ready, for a wonder, to let our wearied fellows see the fresh forces they had to conquer.

As the Sixty-ninth and Seventy-ninth wound round the meadows to the north of this hill, and began to cross the road apparently with the inten-

tion of scaling it, we saw a column coming down from the farthest perspective, and for a moment believed it to be a portion of Hunter's Division, and that it had succeeded in completely turning the enemy's rear. A wild shout rose from us all. But soon the look-outs saw that the ensigns bore secession banners, and we knew that Johnson, or some other rebel general, was leading a horde of fresh troops against our united right and centre. It was time for more regiments to be sent forward, and Keyes was ordered to advance with the First Tyler Brigade. The three Connecticut regiments and the Fourth Maine came on with a will; the First Connecticut was posted in reserve, and the other three corps swept up the field, by the ford on the right, to aid the struggling advance.

All eyes were now directed to the distant hill-top, now the centre of the fight. All could see the enemy's infantry ranging darkly against the sky beyond, and the first lines of our men moving with fine determination up the steep slope. The cannonading upon our advance, the struggle upon the hill-top, the interchange of position between the contestants, were watched by us, and as new forces rushed in upon the enemy's side the scene was repeated over and over again. It must have been here, I think, that the Sixty-ninth took and lost a battery eight times in succession, and finally were compelled, totally exhausted, to resign the completion of their work to the Connecticut regiments which had just come up.

The Third Connecticut finally carried that summit, unfurled the stars and stripes above it, and paused from the fight to cheer for the Union cause.

Then the battle began to work down the hill, the returning half of the circle which the enemy, driven before the desperate charges of our troops, described during the day, until the very point where Tyler's advance commenced the action. Down the hill, and into the valley thickets on the left, the Zouaves, the Connecticut and New York regiments, with the unconquerable Rhode Islanders, drove the continually enlarging but always vanquished columns of the enemy. It was only to meet more batteries, earthwork succeeding earthwork, ambuscade after ambuscade. Our fellows were hot and weary; most had drunk no water during hours of dust, and smoke, and insufferable heat. No one knows what choking the battle atmosphere produces in a few moments, until he has personally experienced it. And so the conflict lulled for a little while. It was the middle of a blazing afternoon. Our regiments held the positions they had won, but the enemy kept receiving additions, and continued a flank movement toward our left—a dangerous movement for us, a movement which those in the rear perceived, and vainly endeavored to induce some general officer to guard against.

Here was the grand blunder, or misfortune, of the battle. A misfortune, that we had no troops in reserve after the Ohio regiments were again sent

forward, this time to assist in building a bridge across the run on the Warrenton road, by the side of the stone bridge known to be mined. A blunder, in that the last reserve was sent forward at all. It should have been retained to guard the rear of the left, and every other regiment on the field should have been promptly recalled over the route by which it had advanced, and ordered only to maintain such positions as rested on a supported, continuous line. Gen. Scott says, to-day, that our troops had accomplished three days' work, and should have rested long before. But McDowell tried to vanquish the South in a single struggle, and the sad result is before us.

As it was, Capt. Alexander, with his Sappers and Miners, was ordered to cut through the abattis by the side of the mined bridge, in the valley directly before us, and lay pontoons across the stream. Carlisle's Artillery was detailed to protect the work, and the Ohio and Wisconsin reserve to support the artillery. Meanwhile, in the lull which I have mentioned, the thousand heroic details of federal valor and the shamelessness of rebel treachery began to reach our ears. We learned the loss of the brave Cameron, the wounding of Heintzelman and Hunter, the fall of Haggerty, and Slocum, and Wilcox. We heard of the dash of the Irishmen and their decimation, and of the havoc made and sustained by the Rhode Islanders, the Highlanders, the Zouaves, and the Connecticut Third; then of the intrepidity

of Burnside and Sprague—how the devoted and daring young governor led the regiments he had so munificently equipped again and again to victorious charges, and at last spiked, with his own hands, the guns he could not carry away. The victory seemed ours. It was an hour sublime in unselfishness, and apparently glorious in its results!

At this time, near four o'clock, I rode forward through the open plain to the creek where the abattis was being assailed by our engineers. The Ohio, Connecticut, and Minnesota regiments were variously posted thereabout; others were in distant portions of the field; all were completely exhausted and partly dissevered; no general of division, except Tyler, could be found. Where were our officers? Where was the foe? Who knew whether we had won or lost?

The question was quickly to be decided for us. A sudden swoop, and a body of cavalry rushed down upon our columns near the bridge. They came from the woods on the left, and infantry poured out behind them. Tyler and his staff, with the reserve, were apparently cut off by the quick manœuvre. I succeeded in gaining the position I had just left, there witnessed the capture of Carlisle's battery in the plain, and saw another force of cavalry and infantry pouring into the road at the very spot where the battle commenced, and near which the South Carolinans, who manned the battery silenced in the morning, had doubtless all day been lying concealed.

The ambulances and wagons had gradually advanced to this spot, and of course an instantaneous confusion and dismay resulted. Our own infantry broke ranks in the field, plunged into the woods to avoid the road, got up the hill as best they could, without leaders, every man saving himself in his own way.

THE FLIGHT FROM THE FIELD.

By the time I reached the top of the hill, the retreat, the panic, the hideous headlong confusion, were now beyond a hope. I was near the rear of the movement, with the brave Capt. Alexander, who endeavored by the most gallant but unavailable exertions to check the onward tumult. It was difficult to believe in the reality of our sudden reverse. "What does it all mean?" I asked Alexander. "It means defeat," was his reply. "We are beaten; it is a shameful, a cowardly retreat! Hold up, men!" he shouted, "don't be such infernal cowards!" and he rode backwards and forwards, placing his horse across the road and vainly trying to rally the running troops. The teams and wagons confused and dismembered every corps. We were now cut off from the advance body by the enemy's infantry, who had rushed on the slope just left by us, surrounded the guns and sutlers' wagons, and were apparently pressing up against us. "It's no use, Alexander," I said, "you must leave with the rest." "I'll be d——d if I will," was his sullen reply, and the splen-

did fellow rode back to make his way as best he could. Meantime I saw officers with leaves and eagles on their shoulder-straps, majors and colonels, who had deserted their commands, pass me galloping as if for dear life. No enemy pursued just then; but I suppose all were afraid that his guns would be trained down the long, narrow avenue, and mow the retreating thousands, and batter to pieces army wagons and everything else which crowded it. Only one field officer, so far as my observation extended, seemed to have remembered his duty. Lieut-Col. Speidel, a foreigner attached to a Connecticut regiment, strove against the current for a league. I positively declare that, with the two exceptions mentioned, all efforts made to check the panic before Centreville was reached, were confined to *civilians*. I saw a man in citizen's dress, who had thrown off his coat, seized a musket, and was trying to rally the soldiers who came by at the point of the bayonet. In a reply to a request for his name, he said it was Washburne, and I learned he was the member by that name from Illinois. The Hon. Mr. Kellogg made a similar effort. Both these Congressmen bravely stood their ground till the last moment, and were serviceable at Centreville in assisting the halt there ultimately made. And other civilians did what they could.

But what a scene! and how terrific the onset of that tumultuous retreat. For three miles, hosts of federal troops—all detached from their regiments, all

mingled in one disorderly rout—were fleeing along the road, but mostly through the lots on either side. Army wagons, sutlers' teams, and private carriages, choked the passage, tumbling against each other, amid clouds of dust, and sickening sights and sounds. Hacks, containing unlucky spectators of the late affray, were smashed like glass, and the occupants were lost sight of in the *debris*. Horses, flying wildly from the battle-field, many of them in death agony, galloped at random forward, joining in the stampede. Those on foot who could catch them rode them bare-back, as much to save themselves from being run over, as to make quicker time. Wounded men, lying along the banks—the few neither left on the field nor taken to the captured hospitals—appealed with raised hands to those who rode horses, begging to be lifted behind, but few regarded such petitions. Then the artillery, such as was saved, came thundering along, smashing and overpowering everything. The regular cavalry, I record it to their shame, joined in the melée, adding to its terrors, for they rode down footmen without mercy. One of the great guns was overturned and lay amid the ruins of a caisson, as I passed it. I saw an artilleryman running between the ponderous fore and after-wheels of his gun-carriage, hanging on with both hands, and vainly striving to jump upon the ordnance. The drivers were spurring the horses; he could not cling much longer, and a more agonized expression never fixed the features of a drowning

man. The carriage bounded from the roughness of a steep hill leading to a creek, he lost his hold, fell, and in an instant the great wheels had crushed the life out of him. Who ever saw such a flight? Could the retreat at Borodino have exceeded it in confusion and tumult? I think not. It did not slack in the least until Centreville was reached. There the sight of the reserve—Miles's Brigade—formed in order on the hill, seemed somewhat to reassure the van. But still the teams and foot soldiers pushed on, passing their own camps and heading swiftly for the distant Potomac, until for ten miles the road over which the grand army had so lately passed southward, gay with unstained banners, and flushed with surety of strength, was covered with the fragments of its retreating forces, shattered and panic-stricken in a single day. From the branch route the trains attached to Hunter's Division had caught the contagion of the flight, and poured into its already swollen current another turbid freshet of confusion and dismay. Who ever saw a more shameful abandonment of munitions gathered at such vast expense? The teamsters, many of them, cut the traces of their horses, and galloped from the wagons. Others threw out their loads to accelerate their flight, and grain, picks, and shovels, and provisions of every kind lay trampled in the dust for leagues. Thousands of muskets strewed the route, and when some of us succeeded in rallying a body of fugitives, and forming them in a line across the road, hardly one

but had thrown away his arms. If the enemy had brought up his artillery and served it upon the retreating train, or had intercepted our progress with five hundred of his cavalry, he might have captured enough supplies for a week's feast of thanksgiving. As it was, enough was left behind to tell the story of the panic. The rout of the federal army seemed complete.

A CHECK TO THE RETREAT.

The sight of Miles's reserve drawn up on the hills at Centreville, supporting a full battery of field pieces, and the efforts of the few officers still faithful to their trust, encouraged many of the fugitive infantry to seek their old camps and go no farther. But the majority pushed on to a point near the late site of Germantown, where Lieut. Brisbane had formed a line of Hunt's artillerists across the road and repulsed all who attempted to break through. I particularly request attention to the service thus rendered by this loyal young officer.

While he was thus engaged, a courier arrived with the news that Col. Montgomery was advancing with a New Jersey Brigade from Falls Church, and that the retreat must be stopped, only the wagons being allowed to pass through. Some thousands of the soldiery had already got far on their way to Washington. Poor fellows! who could blame them? Their own colonels had deserted them, only leaving orders for them to reach Arlington Heights as soon

as they could. A few miles further I met Montgomery swiftly pressing to the rescue, and reported the success of Lieut. Brisbane's efforts. And so I rode along, as well as my wearied horse could carry me, past groups of straggling fugitives, to Fairfax, where Col. Woodbury was expecting, and guarding against, a flank movement of the enemy, and on again to Long Bridge and the Potomac. But the van of the runaway soldiers had made such time that I found a host of them at the Jersey intrenchments begging the sentinels to allow them to cross the bridge. To-day we learn of the safe retreat of the main body of the army; that they were feebly followed by the rebels as far as Fairfax, but are now within the Arlington lines, and that McDowell, a stunned and vanquished general, is overlooking the wreck of his columns from his old quarters at the Custis mansion.

OUR LOSSES.

The list of the killed and wounded in this wide-spread action will not be found proportionate to the numbers engaged on either side, and to the duration of the conflict. The nature of the ground, and the fact that the struggle was confined to attacks upon batteries and ambuscades, made the whole affair a series of fiery skirmishes, rather than a grand field encounter. Men fought with a kind of American individuality—each for himself—and the musketry firing was of the most irregular character. There

were few such heavy volleys as those which made the hills echo last Thursday.

It would not be surprising if our entire loss in killed and wounded should prove to have been not over a thousand men. The rebels must have suffered twice as much from the terrific cannonading of our artillery in the forenoon, and from the desperate charges of the Zouaves, the Sixty-ninth, and the other corps which were especially distinguished in the engagement. The Zouaves captured two batteries, fought hand to hand with the Carolinians in a furious bowie-knife conflict, routed the famous Black Horse Cavalry, and only broke ranks when victory became hopeless.

Nine-tenths of our killed and wounded were perforce left on the field, and in the hospitals at either end; and as the enemy retains possession of the ground, we can get no accurate details of our losses. From prisoners taken by us we learned that the rebel leaders, determined to have no incumbrances on their hands, issued orders to give no quarter. It is positively known that many of our comrades were bayoneted where they fell. All the wounded Zouaves suffered this inhuman fate.

Rickett's, Carlisle's, and the West Point batteries remain in the enemy's possession. Twenty-three of our guns, including the thirty-two-pound siege pieces, were taken.* But Sherman, who went into action

* Six of the twenty-three cannon were recovered the next day by Col. Einstein, the enemy having delayed moving them from the field.

with six cannon, came out with eight—two of them dragged from the rebel embrasures. Large numbers of sutlers' and train wagons are probably cut off, and abandoned arms and munitions have fallen into the enemy's hands. At the date of this letter, it is uncertain whether any of our regiments which were intercepted at the time of the panic have surrendered themselves to the rebels; but this must be the case with many of the infantry who, ignorant of the country, starving and exhausted, dashed into the forests in their retreat. Every hour, however, is reducing our list of missing, as the stragglers reach their old camps along the Potomac.

THEORY OF THE DEFEAT.

The disastrous result of the action was perhaps inevitable—even though no panic had occurred at the close—from the three causes against which the noblest soldiery can never successfully oppose their daring. First, the enemy's forces had been largely underrated, and nearly doubled our own in number; second, the onus of the attack rested entirely upon us, and the natural and scientific defences of the rebels made their position almost impregnable; third, many of our leaders displayed a lamentable want of military knowledge. There was little real generalship in the field. There was no one mind of the Napoleonic order, at once centralizing and comprehending the entire movement of the day. There

was no one to organize our regiments in strong, swift-moving columns, and hurl them powerfully against the foe. Nor were the generals of division more competent to their work. They exhibited personal bravery, but advantages gained were not secured; important points were abandoned as soon as carried; and a reckless, fatiguing pursuit preferred, until Beauregard and Davis, who commanded in person, led us on to positions thoroughly available for the attack of their final reinforcements. As for us, no one had thought of providing that reserve absolutely necessary to the sealing and completion of a battle's successes. *It is the last conflict of the day that decides the victory and defeat.* We had no cavalry to rout our retreating foe. Our artillery was not rendered efficient in the afternoon. Gen. Tyler neglected to guard his rear, and to check the pushing forward of his trains. As for the colonels, many of those who were not wounded or killed in the engagement exhibited not merely inefficiency, but the pusillanimity which I have before recorded. To conclude: Before we can force our way through a country as well adapted for strategic defence as the fastnesses of the Piedmontese, the defiles of Switzerland, or the almost unconquerable wilds in which Schamyl so long held the Russians at bay—before we can possess and advance beyond the scientific intrenchments with which the skill of disloyal officers has made those Virginia forests so fearfully and mysteriously deathful to our patriotic soldiery, we

must discover the executive leader whose genius shall oppose new modes of subduing a novel, and thus far successful method of warfare, and whose alert action shall carry his devices into resistless effect.

THE END.

From Vanity Fair.

ON THE LATE SACRILEGE IN VIRGINIA

ALL men till now who bear the Christian name,
  However hard their hearts, and fierce their strife,
  Have satisfied their hate with taking life,
The worst respecting death, through utter shame!
Cowards now there be, whose murderous hands are red
  With our dead soldiers' blood; not shed in fight,
  But crushed from their cold veins, when slain outright—
Great God! they dare to mutilate the dead!
Virginia! thou shalt pay for this ere long;
  Thy lips shall drain to the dregs the bitter cup;
  The outraged spirit of the North is up,
Back to thy batteries, then, and make them strong!
Henceforth thy blood shall be upon thy head,
Though, unlike thee, we war not with the Dead!

R. H. STODDARD.

July 24th, 1861.

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